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SUBJECT: SAO PAULO CONTACTS RAISE CONCERNS REGARDING RISING HATE  
CRIMES

REF: SAO PAULO 895

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

Summary

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11. (SBU) Brazil's image of a racially and culturally harmonious country contrasts with the reality that deeply-held prejudices and stereotypes are contributing to a rise in hate crimes. Contacts tell us that while a national movement has not yet taken root, skinhead gangs and racist websites are causing increased concern among the Afro-Brazilian and Jewish communities, the two principal target groups. End Summary.

Racial Crimes

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12. (SBU) With a mixed population of African slave descendants, European (particularly Italian, Portuguese, German and Polish) settlers, Japanese immigrants as well as residents from a variety of other countries, Brazil is a melting pot of races and cultures. As the public debates affirmative action programs and quota initiatives, some white youth feel like they will lose their privileged position in society, according to Margarete Barreto, Chief of the Civil Police's Racial Crimes and Acts of Intolerance Unit. This attitude is bringing new life to racist views with a corollary rise in violence, she said. According to Marco Antonio Zito Alvarenga, President of the Sao Paulo Bar Association's (OAB-SP) Antidiscrimination Committee, his organization receives 4-5 accusations of hate crimes per month, and it appears that the number of accusations is increasing. The types of racially motivated crimes include workplace discrimination, accusations against police treatment based on race, and racism in the classroom. Alvarenga added that the number of cases -almost all the ones the OAB-SP receives are against Afro-Brazilians - reflect a small amount of the actual crimes committed because the Bar Association is only one group working against discrimination. He emphasized that racism is institutionalized in Brazil and unlikely to disappear.

13. (SBU) In the State of Sao Paulo, crimes committed against

Afro-Brazilians represent the greatest proportion of hate crimes, but Japanese-Brazilians are sometimes victims as well, Chief Barreto noted. Barreto said that violence against Japanese-Brazilians occurs particularly in the city of Sao Paulo and its surroundings, which claim a population of several million people of Japanese descent. She cited as an example a recent case in which a Japanese-Brazilian youth was brutally attacked and had Nazi symbols etched into his arms.

#### Neo-Nazism on the Rise

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14. (SBU) Chief Barreto said that she is increasingly concerned with the fact that the neo-Nazi movement, which rages not only against Afro-Brazilians but also targets homosexuals, immigrants and Jewish Brazilians, is gaining in strength. Neo-Nazis are improving their organizational skills and communication between members through popular websites, especially those that target the young. University of Sao Paulo Professor Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, who has extensively studied racism and anti-Semitism in Brazil, added that young members join skinhead gangs because they want to feel a sense of "belonging." These youth, who often come from troubled homes and do not have access to education, jobs or extracurricular activities are drawn to groups who advertise raves and parties and offer a sense of "brotherhood." As in other countries, Chief Barreto indicated that neo-Nazis in Brazil also aim to recruit among the poor and disenfranchised, and they are also succeeding in increasing their ranks by appealing to lower-middle class youth as well. Barreto added that her team is having difficulty monitoring all of the local neo-Nazi blogs and web pages because their number is rising at such a fast rate.

15. (SBU) According to Barreto, recent growth in the number of neo-Nazi gangs and websites came unexpectedly because Brazil has

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such a culturally and racially mixed society, without the "pure white" element theorized by racists in other countries. She explained that as President Lula's Workers' Party (PT) began a string of electoral successes and the PT's leftist oratory gained greater media attention, rightist elements began to stir. Although hate crimes occur all over Brazil, they are more frequent in the south, which is known in Brazil as the "German region" because of the large population of German descendants who live there. Barreto believes neo-Nazis are getting financial support from outside of Brazil, and indicated that her unit has found strong ties between domestic groups and skinheads in Argentina and Italy. Professor Carneiro agreed that neo-Nazi support is coming from Argentina and added that groups in Mexico and especially the United States and Germany provide paper material, videos and DVDs to organizations in Brazil.

#### Anti-Semitic Crimes

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16. (SBU) Barreto said that part of the reason Sao Paulo has escaped from major attacks against Jewish institutions like those that occurred in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994 is because of the Jewish community's organization and security apparatus, including good relations with the state's public security system. Prosecutor Alvarenga repeated this view and added that the Jewish community sues in court directly rather than refer cases to the Bar. Barreto described a case in which Molotov cocktails were thrown at a synagogue in the city of Campinas in August 2006 as the only significant act in recent years. Even this attack was relatively minor, considering that damage was minimal and no one died, she said. She warned that the recent attack on the Campinas synagogue and the growth in websites is only the beginning of what will likely be continued expansion in anti-Semitic activities. She linked this growth to part of the rising trend in "international intolerance" and to events in the Middle East.

17. (SBU) State of Sao Paulo Jewish Federation Director of Security Andre Grunebaum (please protect) repeated Barreto's claim that skinhead gangs and anti-Semitic websites are growing but emphasized there does not appear to be an organized anti-Jewish movement in

Brazil, at least not yet. He stated that the Jewish community is certain that attacks against Jewish institutions will increase and that the Buenos Aires incidents were indicators of the type of horrors that could occur in Brazil as well.

#### Statistics on Hate Crimes

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¶18. (SBU) According to Tulio Kahn, Coordinator at the Sao Paulo State Secretariat for Public Security Coordinating Body for Analysis and Planning, the incidence of hate crimes committed in Sao Paulo remains relatively steady. Kahn presented figures showing that victims reported 52 hate crimes in the city of Sao Paulo in 2006 and 39 in the first 10 months of 2007 and that the city of Sao Paulo has had a total of 429 incidents reported to the police since 1999. Kahn told us that these figures do not fully represent reality because victims do not necessarily tell the police about such crimes and the State of Sao Paulo is only beginning to collect all data into one system. He also accused some law enforcement officials of classifying many hate crimes as other infractions of the law such as libel because they are easier to prosecute. In Kahn's assessment, the numbers do not accurately reflect that hate crimes are, in fact, growing.

#### Courts and Police Present Challenges

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¶19. (SBU) Prosecutor Alvarenga said that one of the reasons fighting racism is difficult is due to the character of the judicial system and law enforcement community. He noted that among senior-level judges in the State of Sao Paulo, only one is black and that discrimination is widespread throughout the police force. Police are much more likely to stop and question a black rather than a white Brazilian, he stated. He added that despite the fact that Brazilian law defines racism as a crime, proving an incident as

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having involved racism is very challenging. The courts are also less than willing to accept and prosecute discrimination cases.

¶10. (SBU) In a recent forum on Afro-Brazilian issues, Sao Paulo State Secretary for Public Security Ronaldo Marzagao stated that the police are making great efforts to combat crime while upholding human rights. He noted that these efforts include respect for all Brazilians regardless of race or cultural background. Responding to Secretary Marzagao, Chindalena Ferreira Barbosa, from the

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organization Political Articulation of Young Blacks, said that the police in fact support a "systematic genocide" against poor Afro-Brazilian youth. (Note: This is particularly strong language to use but reflects how heated the debate on hate issues is in Sao Paulo. End Note.) According to Barbosa, police officers are much more likely to "shoot first and ask questions later" in situations that law enforcement officials assume are crimes and in cases in which before assessing the situation, a police officer has already determined that the Afro-Brazilian at the crime scene is the perpetrator of the crime. (Note: A Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) study on public security conducted between 1999 and 2005 found that Afro-Brazilians are much more likely to die of violence than whites. The research, however, does not indicate what proportion of death caused by violence is due to police shootings. End Note.)

#### Comment

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¶11. (SBU) Brazil has always made a concerted effort to display its racial and cultural harmony as the country's greatest national achievement. This endeavor overlooks a long history of crimes committed against individuals based on their skin color or religious affiliation. What is most troubling, however, is that contacts across the spectrum believe Brazil is only at the beginning stages of a growing problem. End Comment.

¶12. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Brasilia.

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